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ABSTRACT

The pamphlet discusses changes in the political leadership of Georgia during the Revolutionary War years. It is one of a series of documents about the American Revolution in Georgia. Designed for junior or senior high school students, it can serve as supplementary reading or a two-week unit. A teacher's guide is included. Political development in Georgia during the revolutionary and confederation periods was affected by many problems in the state: small population, wide extent of settlement, and rivalry between the coast and backcountry. Strong factional groups within the pathiot Party and brief restoration of a British provincial government divided the state and prevented regularization of government until after 1782. Georgia political history in this period is a study of party and provincial congress leaders. They endeavored to promote population growth, build a new capital city, and create a state university. The coastal-upcountry struggle resulted in the emergence of upcountry leaders and the physical relocation of the capital. Savannah and the coast lost much political power. The teacher's guide presents discussion questions, activities, and a word game based on the text. (Author/AV)

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# Political Changes in Georgia 1775-1787

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Editors' Note:

One of the early concerns of the Georgia Commission for the National Bicentennial Celebration was the lack of material on Revolutionary Georgia available for use in the state's public schools during the bicentennial years. As a result, one of the first projects of the Commission was the preparation of a series of pamphlets on the American Revolution in Georgia aimed specifically at public school use. With the cooperation of the Georgia Department of Education, this project has become a reality. Thirteen pamphlets are scheduled to be published between 1974 and 1978.

Our purpose in publishing these pamphlets is to present a clear, concise picture of Georgia's history during these important days. We hope that our efforts will encourage students' interest and add to their knowledge of Georgia's activities during the American Revolution.

Kenneth Coleman
Milton Ready

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**Political Changes in Georgia, 1775-1787**

Change characterized political development in Georgia during the American Revolution. Since Georgia was at the beginning of the war the most economically undeveloped of the colonies which rebelled, she was the slowest to join the Revolutionary movement. The influence of Governor Sir James Wright and other prominent Georgia leaders helped keep the colony from following the others into the rift with England until very late. When the Revolutionary spirit emerged, factions developed around several powerful personages. These groupings became the mainstream of Georgia politics. In the mid 1770's, Georgia politics were ripe for confident individuals to assert themselves in a leadership role. It is through these groups and the men who led them that we can better understand political development in Georgia during the Revolutionary period. This time was one of rapid and thrilling development in Georgia. Despite the chaos, unrest and ongoing military problems, the political structure was altered from its colonial status. Out of this alteration came the new factions, personalities, issues and machinery of government that established and operated the new state.

**Politics in 1775**

During the entire colonial period, the political leadership of Georgia centered around Savannah and the area south to Fort Frederica. Much of this old colonial strength was still demonstrated in the Second Provincial Congress which assembled at Tondee's Tavern in Savannah on July 4, 1775. Christ Church (Savannah) Parish and St. John's (Midway area) controlled a majority of the 102 delegates. Archibald Bulloch, a prominent Savannah attorney, was elected president of the congress. Bulloch had represented Savannah in the colonial assembly for a number of years and was a leader of other Revolutionary assemblies.

At this Second Provincial Congress, Bulloch, John Houstoun, the Reverend John J. Zubly, Noble W. Jones and Lyman Hall were elected delegates to the Second Continental Congress, then meeting in Philadelphia. With this step, the provincial congress began to place Georgia in the Revolutionary movement along with the rest of the colonies. Once committed to participate with the other colonies, the provincial congress took the first steps to establish Georgia's position. A petition was drawn up to be sent to the King, and money was to be raised for the support of the provincial congress. People who disobeyed the rules of the congress or refused to pay their money were to be deemed enemies of the province. Although there was not at this time general agreement concerning Georgia's exact position, the delegates did adopt the Association, an agreement among the rebelling colonies which provided for nonimportation and nonconsumption of British goods until the English accepted the American concept of their rights. The acceptance of the Association brought Georgia into conformity with the other colonies. Some of the delegates to the provincial congress who were arguing about protecting their rights as Englishmen, later refused to follow Georgia into independence. Nevertheless, the attempts and directives to enforce conformity by the majority of the congress created a tension which began to divide the leadership into political factions. One group eventually became loyalists and supported restoration of the royal government in Georgia; a second group, though conservative in temper, supported the struggle with England; and a third emerging more radical group demanded not only independence but also more participation by the people of the upcountry. These three political factions heightened the contest for control in Georgia during the remainder of 1775 after the congress adjourned on July 17. In effect, this provincial congress had become a *de facto* government challenging the royal officials for control of Georgia.

To provide leadership while the provincial congress was adjourned several committees were appointed. One, a council of safety, was composed

of the Savannah delegates. They were to provide information on the continuing disputes with England, to advise the delegates to the Continental Congress and to make decisions relative to local problems which might develop. Further the council of safety reviewed the publishing of the *Georgia Gazette* to make certain that only favorable news was printed.

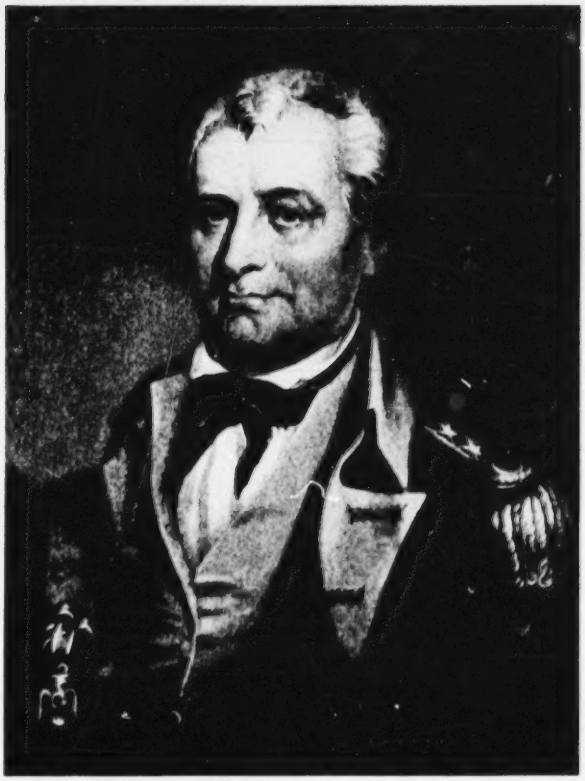
**Dissolution of the Royal Government**

The last six months of 1775 saw rapid political change. Conservative leaders like the Reverend Mr. Zubly reached the point beyond which they would not support the provincial congress. Others who espoused the King's cause were tarred and feathered, forcing some people to side with the patriot Whigs for fear of reprisal and still others to join Zubly in believing that the protest had gone too far. The excesses of the radical Whigs during this period caused some men to become loyalists. While the choices were being made in this very personal way, the extralegal committees that had resulted from the Second Provincial Congress began to assume more and more control including the militia, Indian negotiations and the courts. By the end of 1775, Governor Wright was for all practical purposes a governor without a government.

Soon factionalism began to appear in the Whig forces of Georgia. As the congress and council of safety debated the control of the troops, the question arose as to who was going to be the commander-in-chief of Georgia's armed forces. One Whig faction composed of the Savannah merchants which heretofore had dominated the Revolutionary movement wished to choose Samuel Elbert. The emerging back-country Whig party endorsed Button Gwinnett. In the end, both groups compromised for the moment to select Lachlan McIntosh. The die was cast; the Whig movement in Georgia polarized into two groups. The more conservative Whigs centered around Savannah. The more radical group developed in the upcountry as the country faction. These factions fought for control of the



Courtesy, Georgia Department of Archives and History



*Lachlan McIntosh*

government during the entire Revolutionary period and most of the confederation period to 1787.

**The Rules and Regulations – The First Georgia Constitution**

While the British troops were in Savannah briefly in 1776, a significant change occured in the government. The Third Provincial Congress assembled in April 1776, at Augusta as a safety measure. Once again Bulloch was elected president of the body. While hostilities broke out around Savannah, and Governor Wright finally fled his post, the third congress was considering a document which became in effect Georgia's first written constitution. On April 15, 1776, this document was issued. Although

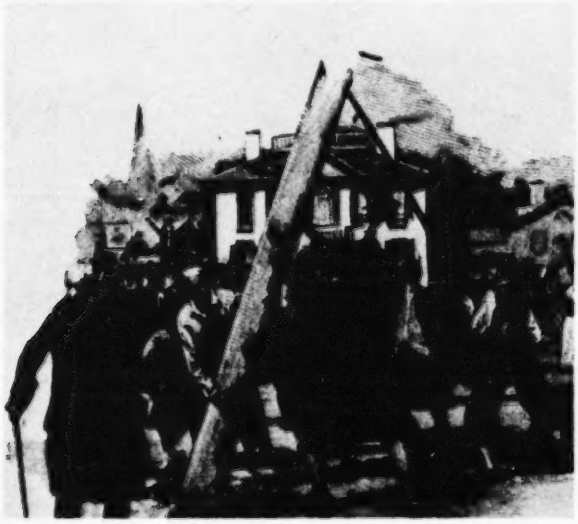
it was a very short constitution, the Rules and Regulations comprised a novel document. Following the pattern which had developed in the preceding three congresses, control of the government resided in the provincial congress. This body was to elect every six months a president and commander-in-chief. Furthermore, a council of safety was created, and the congress was even to pick the judges of the new state judiciary.

The Rules and Regulations provided a basic form for government in Georgia for a year while the political process was being regularized. Despite a fairly clear-cut statement of legislative supremacy, as the year progressed many modifications were made in the actual governing procedures due to the crises of the period. Both the president and his council exercised more power during this period than they had received in this document.

**The State Constitutional Convention**

On August 6, 1776, to the booming of cannon and in the light of a burning effigy of George III, Savannahians heard the Declaration of Independence for the first time. Following this formal break with England, President Bulloch issued an election call to select delegates to a new congress to meet in Savannah that October.

Artist's sketch from *Stories of Georgia*, by Joel Chandler Harris, 1896.



*The Liberty Boys*

This congress met sporadically from October until the following February. At the end it promulgated the new state constitution. This document was written by the more radical element of the Revolutionary leaders. Although lip service was paid to the separation of powers, in effect, the constitution gave dominant power to the legislature. It was empowered to pass the laws, as well as to elect the governor and council. Elections for the assembly were to be held once a year, and the suffrage was given to all white males, age 21, who had lived in Georgia for six months and owned property worth £10 or followed a trade. Moreover, if anybody who had the right did not vote, he was subject to a fine. The old colonial parishes were abolished and eight counties were created. These counties, with the exception of Liberty, were named for English politicians who had supported the cause of American rights prior to the Revolution—Wilkes, Richmond, Burke, Effingham, Chatham, Glynn and Camden. Under the new structure of government, the local county organizations became increasingly important in the politics of Georgia. At this local level, county officials were created, schools were to be developed and the militia was to be maintained.

The nature of this constitution is reflective of the spirit and philosophy of many of the Revolutionary leaders. With the inclusion of a bill of rights, a reference to separation of powers and the insistence that the governed vote for the governmental leaders, this document was in character with the then current American mood. Further, the actual unbalancing of the government in favor of the legislature indicates the serious reservations which the Georgians, along with other colonists, had developed in the late colonial period about the power of the executive.

From *History of Georgia*, by Robert Preston Brooks, 1913.

*Button Gwinnett*

The document was widely accepted in the state because most of the extremely conservative men had been silenced by the pressure of the radicals. Conservative Whigs like Joseph Clay, a wealthy Savannah merchant, were appalled at the "Democratical" character of the constitution. They were afraid that the men in power were not entitled to their position. Nevertheless, the document was the constitution of Georgia for the next 12 years.

Bulloch did not live to see the new constitution. He died quite unexpectedly and was replaced by Button Gwinnett, who was both a merchant and plantation owner. He had represented Georgia at the Second Continental Congress and was there to sign the Declaration of Independence. Gwinnett had been active in the convention which drafted the constitution but was named president under the old Rules and Regulations. He called for the elections of an assembly to meet at Savannah in May 1777, under the new constitution. At this meeting, John Adams Treutlen was elected governor. He was a merchant and planter who came from Ebenezer and probably was a compromise between the more conservative and radical Whigs.

**Wartime State Government**

Despite the formalization of government in Georgia, the Whigs continued to be split in bitter factions. This divisive political condition, coupled with the still present loyalist strength, made the political setting in Georgia bloody and competitive. Expansion continued in the Whig factions which had emerged over the selection of commander of the Georgia armed forces and had become increasingly bitter during the constitutional convention. Gwinnett was commanding the state troops and McIntosh was commanding the continental troops when they made an abortive attack on St. Augustine in 1777. Charges for responsibility of the failure flew bitterly from the rival camps. The result was a duel between McIntosh and Gwinnett which resulted in death for the latter, illustrating the heatedness of factional politics in that period. Many of the early Georgia politicians were particularly sensitive about their position and were prone to respond in very belligerent tones to any slur upon their reputations. This sensitivity to the protection of one's honor seems to symbolize a new society. Also, politics of this period had a very personal tone which heightened the factionalism. For example, at the same time in a dispute over balloting in a Savannah election, James Habersham Jr., of the politically prominent Habersham family, simply ran his opponent, Lieutenant Nathaniel Hughes, through with a sword, killing him.

After Gwinnett's death in the duel, the remaining leaders of his faction attempted to extract retribution from McIntosh. Two leaders of the country

faction, Lyman Hall and Joseph Wood, tried to have McIntosh removed from his command. Although they secured signed petitions against him, McIntosh's friend, George Walton, succeeded in having him transferred to a northern command in the Continental Army.

The political situation became further confused as South Carolina political leaders made a strong effort to unite the two states. The South Carolina assembly sent William Henry Drayton to Georgia to gather support for the merger. The only support which he found was among those out of office. Drayton found so much opposition among governmental officers that Governor Treutlen finally had a reward posted for the South Carolina representative. The pressure from the neighboring state caused many Georgians to feel more identity with their state and be more supportive of its new Whig government. The result was the development of more of a sense of unity among Georgians.

While they remained in power, the radical Whigs and their supporters viewed their political role as agitators for change. They even attempted to start a war with the Cherokee Indians to quiet the urgings of their backcountry supporters, which would have resulted in simultaneous fighting with the British, the loyalists and the Indians. They would have been fighting both internally and on every border. Thus, their impetuous nature characterized their government.

Governor Treutlen was replaced in early 1778 by John Houstoun of a politically and economically prominent family. In more peaceful times his election would have reflected a reaction to the radical faction. However, Houstoun's term was far from normal, even in the Revolutionary period. In the spring of 1778, the executive council gave Houstoun almost dictatorial powers to carry on the government during the expedition against St. Augustine. The councillors wrote that he had these powers "until a time of less disquiet shall happen and the constitution take its regular course." With the British capture of Savannah in December 1778, the state government of Georgia was intermittently disrupted and disorganized for the next four years.

**The Restoration Government**

While the British invasion of Georgia was disrupting the state government, Governor Wright restored his old royal regime. From March 1779, until July 1782, a royal provincial government was in operation in Savannah and other parts of Georgia controlled by British troops. To manage this government, Wright, Lieutenant Governor John Graham, Chief Justice Anthony Strokes and other old royal officials returned from exile, and resident loyalists appeared to assume roles of leadership. Despite Wright's confidence in restoring royal government to Georgia, on several occasions he delayed the planned election of a provincial assembly fearing that men favorable to the Whigs might be elected. He delayed the election for a year, until finally it was held in the restored parishes. When this elected assembly met, most of its actions concerned return-

From *Biography of the Signers to the Declaration of Independence*, by John Sanderson, 1865 (illustrated edition).

*Duel between McIntosh and Gwinnett*

ing Georgia to its prewar situation and placing restrictions on those who had rebelled.

The power of this government was limited, although at times it controlled much of the settled land area of Georgia. Savannah was the capital and the territory beyond became part of the restored colony solely where British military power existed. Wright soon discovered that even his restored assembly did not always agree with him on how to carry on the government, and he often had to push his position as governor without the backing of the assembly. Thus, the government of the restored colony was often no more successful during this period than the Whig government.

When the second British period in Georgia ended in 1782, over a thousand loyalists left the colony with their slaves. The restoration had created much bitterness and a bloody civil war. A lasting political change occurred when the loyalists departed at the end of the war, leaving only the Whig factions to contest for power. This departure removed a politically conservative segment of the Georgian society.

**State Government on the Run**

With the British capture of Savannah, the general assembly, which had been elected in December 1778, was told to assemble in Augusta. This city now became the capital of the state except when the British occupied it. During the entire time of British restoration, the Whig Government of Georgia was, in general, chaotic. Coupled with the bitter civil war which had developed between Whigs and loyalists, the Whigs could not maintain a united government. As early as the Houstoun government, Colonel George Wells had opposed Houstoun's power as being "unconstitutional."

Houstoun apparently had his fill of the chaotic politics of the time by the end of 1778 when the British returned. At that point, a few newly elected members of the government organized themselves into an executive council. Then this body elected William Glascock as president. With a brief British military takeover of Augusta, this group fled into exile in South Carolina. The records are very scanty for this period. After the British withdrew from Augusta, the remnants of the executive council constituted the Supreme Executive Council. They elected as president Seth John Cuthbert on July 24, 1779, and then John Wereat on August 6, 1779. This government tried to function while the British were seeking to establish dominance over most of Georgia. Thus, when the election call went out in the fall, with British troops spreading across the state, voters were told by the Supreme Executive Council to seek a voting place in a county seat still controlled by Whigs.

This confusing situation resulted in a number of radical Whigs, mainly from Wilkes County, organizing a second government with George Walton as governor and Glascock as speaker of the assembly. Although Walton originally had been a conservative, after sharing a prison cell with Wells when they were British prisoners following the fall of Savannah, Walton joined the radical Whigs. As a result of this makeshift election, there were two Whig governments plus the restored loyalist government. In an area of such limited population, political confusion reigned. Walton acted as governor and tried to convince others that he was in control. Wereat, as president of the Supreme Executive Council, likewise held a position of power contesting for authority with Walton. A dispute broke out over charges and countercharges as to which group was responsible for losing Savannah, and the old attacks on McIntosh were brought back to life. Walton forged a letter reputedly signed by Glascock about McIntosh and this letter haunted his political career for the next few years.

Walton was elected a delegate to the Second Continental Congress in January 1780, at the same time that Richard Howley was elected governor. The election of Howley, a Walton man, by the assembly called by the Supreme Executive Council ended the two-Whig government period in Georgia

Courtesy, Georgia Department of Archives and History

*George Walton*

politics. This new government voided all of the actions of the Wereat council. Howley likewise was elected to Congress so Wells, the president of the council, replaced him as chief executive. Wells apparently served only three days before being challenged to a duel by James Jackson, an army leader, who was just beginning his rise to prominence in Georgia politics. Wells died in the duel.

During the session of this assembly in early 1780, it voted to make Augusta the capital and tried to stimulate population growth in the backcountry beyond Augusta. These two acts passed at the height of the war illustrated the political shift that had been brewing in Georgia for several years – the move away from the coast as the center of political strength. This attempt at creating a stable government in 1780 failed with the British occupation of Augusta. Howley went to congress; Wells was dead; his replacement, Stephen Heard, fled to South Carolina out of fear; and at that point Myrick Davies became president of the Council. These rapid changes in the government provided no rallying point for the war-torn state. Davies, in fact, may not even have acted as president, as the Whig government in Georgia fell apart at approximately the same time he was elected.

**The Strengthening of State Government**

With the departure of Heard to South Carolina, the mere existence of a Whig government in Georgia became uncertain. For all practical purposes, no state government existed from May 1780 until July 1781. In this period, actions against the British were taken on the authority of local military officers and other concerned patriots. Guerrilla warfare on both sides turned this period into one of bloody civil war.

In July 1781, Nathanael Greene, the commander of the Continental forces in the South, realized that order needed to be restored in Georgia; so he dispatched Joseph Clay to make the attempt. Clay, who had been a merchant in Savannah prior to the war and had diligently supported the Whig cause, accepted the challenge. He arrived in the state in July 1781, followed shortly by Nathan Brownson, a medical officer in the Continental Army, who was instructed to organize the dispersed county militia companies into some semblance of order. The two men worked together. The result was an assembly called in August. Although there are no records concerning how this meeting was called, the body nevertheless elected Brownson as governor. A full slate of state officers were named and most of the counties were represented in the meeting. Despite the pressing problems which had developed over the preceding year and a half, the assembly in its brief session of five days only dealt

with a few laws designed to restore constitutional government.

In spite of the limited contributions of this assembly to political progress during the period, the actions taken were heralded as the return of state government and a beginning of the regularization of the state. Nevertheless, during the fall of 1781, the political arena reflected the bitterness of the ongoing civil war. Tories made an active attempt to kidnap Governor Brownson with his council. Although this attempt failed, some Tories were successful in capturing Myrick Davis, the president of the council, who was subsequently murdered.

Despite the late fall attempts of the British to terrorize political leaders, state elections were held in every county. When the assembly met in January 1782, representatives were there from every county. Within seven months, the British evacuated Savannah and Governor Wright departed a second time for England. By the end of the year, the state government was functioning throughout Georgia.

**Politics in the 1780's**

The assembly was faced with many problems of restoration. It elected John Martin as governor. From that point, the members considered legislation dealing with obtaining food for those in need and supporting the troops which were still in the field. Further, the assembly agreed to move the government to Ebenezer. Obviously, the coastal delegates did not wish to travel all the way to Augusta. After the British evacuated Savannah, the government was moved back to that city.

Many of the problems which had affected the political situation during the war continued during the confederation period. The same basic factions struggled for power, the Indian problem became more acute, the poor state of the government finances continued and the question now arose as to the treatment of the remaining loyalists. In addition, the government continued to have many temperamental leaders who contested violently for power. That is, they fought over the political development in Georgia, when they bothered to come to a meeting of the assembly. Of the 20 meetings of the assembly called between 1782 and 1789, only 11 had the necessary quorum to carry on legislative business. The Georgia political scene continued to be unstable.

This period became the time in which the ambitions of many Georgians were realized. For example, George Mathews migrated from Virginia in 1784 and was elected governor in 1787. Abraham Baldwin came in 1783, was elected to the assembly in 1785, and represented Georgia in the Federal

Courtesy, Georgia Department of Archives and History

*Nathanael Green*

Constitutional Convention in 1787. These new leaders were received in part because the bitterness of the preceding eight years made new talent much in demand.

The governors during this period continued to represent the old factions. Lyman Hall was elected in 1783. He had been a leader of the radical faction since the early days of the Revolution. John Houstoun, who returned to the governorship in 1784, represented the more conservative faction. He was in turn followed by Samuel Elbert in 1785 and Edward Telfair in 1786, both of whom represented the same faction as Houstoun. Then George Mathews, George Handley and George Walton, representing the upcountry radical group, served in succession from 1787 to 1789.

The true center of political strength in Georgia during this time was the legislature. This body elected the governor, the council and the judiciary. However, despite commitment to their position, the legislators had a difficult time living up to their aspirations. The members viewed their power very broadly. For example, in early 1783, the legislature elected George Walton as chief justice. In a confusing shift, the next day it decided to investigate his forged letter dealing with Lachlan McIntosh which had caused such a stir in 1780. Because Walton refused to entertain a grand jury presentment against those involved in the situation, this body requested Governor Hall to suspend Walton pending a full investigation. Nothing came from the charges, and later Walton returned to the bench. This, however, illustrates the continuation of disputes which had started at the beginning of the war.

The assembly was faced with many ongoing political problems during this period which reoccurred from year to year. Money was perhaps the major concern. Georgia, like the other states during the Revolution, had borrowed heavily. With the end of the war, schemes had to be devised to pay the indebtedness. Land taxes were adopted and export-import duties were imposed. Collectively, none of these measures were designed to produce enough money for the state to pay its debts and to meet its ongoing obligations. The legislators shied away from a firm commitment to pay the state's debts. For the most part, however, tax collection was very slow, which meant that year after year little money came in. The end result was that the state often attempted to meet its financial obligations by paying in valuable property. For example, acreages of land were authorized to meet certain debts like salaries, bounties to Revolutionary soldiers and other commitments.

Land granting was another continuing question. The public domain of the state was immense, including most of the present states of Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. In fact, it was a major source of potential strength. To this end, the state legislature devoted much of its time to legislation concerning land. This land was used by the state to induce settlers to come to Georgia. The availability of land caused a phenomenal growth of the state along the frontier. Bounties of land were given to prominent patriots like General Nathanael Greene and General Anthony Wayne for their services to the state.

Other types of land legislation involved the confiscation of lands belonging to British loyalists. At the end of the war, the assembly both confiscated land and banished individuals from Georgia. Almost as soon as these actions became laws, the assembly, at the urging of some prominent leaders, instituted a campaign of leniency for the loyalists who wished to remain in Georgia. Often the assembly lessened the loss or removed it altogether. This resulted in a good number of loyalists remaining in Georgia to help its growth.

The land legislation designed to attract new settlers created problems with the Indians, who never willingly ceded land as rapidly as settlers demanded it. With thousands of new settlers pouring into the state seeking new homes, pressure on the frontier built up rapidly. Despite the state's

poor financial condition, the militia had to be maintained to guard the area. During the entire period, there was a constant threat of warfare. The militia was also kept on the frontier because of the lawlessness that had developed there. Marauding bands of outlaws kept the frontier area in a constant state of fright. Both these bands and the Indians kept the already overtaxed government busy trying to provide some protection in order to keep on attracting new settlers to populate the state.

The rapid flow of settlers into the state likewise brought political change. With the departure of the British in 1782, the coastal politicians had succeeded temporarily in returning the capital to Savannah. However, the following year the executive office of the state moved back to Augusta for a part of each year. As a result of this move, a conflict occurred as to the location of the capital. In the next three years, the seat of government was shifted 10 times between Augusta and Savannah. When Governor Telfair ordered the transportation of all the state records to Augusta, the Savannah delegates resisted sharply. A real struggle developed before the records were moved to Augusta. Finally in 1786 the assembly passed a law creating the new town of Louisville, which was to become the capital. Until the time that this new city was finished, Augusta was to be the state capital. It was 1795 when Louisville became the capital. The conflict over the shift demonstrates the coastal-upcountry factionalism of Georgia politics that had continued since the beginning of the war.

While the legislators were creating a new capital by law, they also took steps to regularize city government in the state. Savannah, Sunbury, Augusta and Brunswick were all given their own governments. At the same time, the legislators also chartered the first state university. This action, at least legislatively, shows the attention that the legislators were paying to the development of the state.

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**Political Overview**

Political development in Georgia during the Revolutionary and confederation periods was affected by the many problems in the state. The small population, the wide extent of settlement, the rivalry between the coast and backcountry and the split between Whig and loyalist all hampered the political development of Georgia. The strong factional groups and the restoration of a British provincial government served to divide the state further and to prevent a regularization of government until after 1782.

Despite the splintered, uncooperative factions there were many strong minded individuals who kept alive the idea of a state through the dark days of the early 1780's. There was a general concern for the development of the state. This agreement provided a source of unity in the state government when all else failed. The smallest, weakest, poorest rebelling colony in 1775 was still a small, weak and poor state in 1787. Yet the ideas of promoting population, building a new city for a capital and creating a state university show the genuine concern of the political leaders for their state. Georgia political history through this time is largely a study of Bulloch, Gwinnett, Treutlen, Houstoun, Walton, Hall, Telfair, Mathews and Jackson, to name a few, and their perseverance for the survival of the state.

These men were vitally concerned with the development of Georgia. Political change did come out of the Revolutionary chaos. The coastal-upcountry struggle of the period resulted in the emergence of upcountry leaders and the physical relocation of the capital. Savannah and the coast lost a great deal of political power.

The end results of the struggle through this period were a reordering of the Georgia political scene, new personalities, new geographic areas and concerns and the deeper involvement of more citizens. All brought significant political change. Eventually as order emerged from chaos, a stable state government was created with its power in the hands of Georgians. In the end, this was the most significant development.

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# Teacher's Guide

**Bonita B. London**

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Atlanta Public Schools

**Focus**

*Political Changes in Georgia, 1775-1787* offers the students an indepth study of the development of Georgia's political system along with the contributions of the men who formed the "new" government.

Although the unit deals specifically with Georgia, it also offers a unique view of the problems, conflicts and evolutionary processes inherent in establishing *any* new system of government.

**Objectives**

- To identify and describe the various political factions involved in setting up Georgia's political system of government.
- To compare and constrast the roles and contributions of the various governing bodies during the Revolutionary period.
- List the provisions of the State Constitution adopted in Georgia in 1776 and compare this to the present constitution.
- Identify individuals who played a prominent role in establishing the pre- and post-war governments in Georgia and list the contributions of each.
- Identify specific problems involved in the political development of Georgia along with the techniques utilized to solve these problems.

**Suggested Schedule**

The unit can be expanded or modified according to course constraints and/or student interest. A minimum of two weeks is suggested. Students would require an additional period of study if they have not been exposed to background information of the American Revolutionary period.

**Course Designation**

The unit can be utilized in Georgia history, American history or as a specialized unit in political science.

**Suggested Vocabulary**

Students would need exposure to the vocabulary prior to beginning the unit and reinforced within the context of the unit.

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| *de facto* | loyalist | radical | merger |
| Whigs | patriots | upcountry | restoration |
| Tories | conservative | extralegal | |

**Discussion Questions**

- Discuss the correlation between Georgia's economic status in pre-Revolutionary days and their ability to form a new government. Is the same correlation true with the formation of all new governments? (Outside sources and Teacher Background Information)

- Why did Georgia hesitate to become involved in the American Revolution? (Other sources – see bibliography)

- Discuss the reasons for numerous changes of Georgia's capital. Why and when was Atlanta finally chosen as the permanent capital? (p. 2, 11, 12, 14, 17, 21.) (Part two can be obtained from the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce or other outside resources.)

- What was the "Association" and how did it bring Georgia into conformity with the other colonies? (p. 2)

- Was the Council of Safety effective? Why do you think they censored news publications? (p. 3) Do the same reasons apply to censorship in other countries today? How?

- What were the major differences between the 1st and 2nd Continental Congress? What purpose did they both serve?

- Name the Georgians appointed to represent the State at the Continental Congress and why they were chosen. Who signed the Declaration of Independence?

- There is no mention of the role of women in forming Georgia's government. Why?

- Why were the Rules and Regulations considered a "novel document?" p. 5

- Georgia is second in its number of counties. How were these divisions decided upon? Discuss pro and con the desirability of having such a large number of independent governmental units.

- What changes might have occurred if South Carolina and Georgia had merged? List some of the changes that would have been in evidence today.

- Discuss the "lasting political change" that took place when the loyalist left Georgia in 1782? p. 12

- What was the role of the Supreme Executive Council? Did they help or hinder the process of establishing a government? Why? (p. 12-15)

- Suppose you had been called into Georgia in July of 1781. What would you have done to bring about order? (p. 15).

- Land grants were prevalent throughout the country after the Revolution. What particular problems did Georgia encounter as a result of these grants? (p. 19-21) Do we have evidence of similar problems today in Georgia?

In counties in the metro area, county commissions and city governments are involved in granting housing for a minimum amount of money anywhere from 300-3000 dollars. The only obligation is the residents must improve the property and loans are given for this purpose at low rates. Students may want to investigate this practice as an activity.

- List and discuss the problems Georgia faced in finally establishing a stable governmental system.
- Discuss our lives today if the British *had* won the American Revolution. How would our lives have been similar? How would they have been different?

**Activities**

The following activities have been subjectively coded for levels of difficulty – L for Low level reading students, A for Average and G for Gifted or Accelerated. This is by no means meant to limit the student, but rather to provide an arbitrary measure of difficulty.

*A, G* Through research, determine why Georgia was "the most economically underdeveloped of the colonies" and the "youngest and weakest." Determine how this affected its ability to organize a stable political system.

*L, A, G* Within any designated time period of Georgia's political development, have students identify with several groups and roleplay of one of the meetings described in the unit.

*G* Ask several students to read Eugenia Price's trilogy (see bibliography) and retell the story to the class.
*Note:* The trilogy is fiction based on fact and makes the study of Georgia history "come alive." It is recommended reading for teachers. However, it should be noted that the trilogy is written in *reverse* order of publication.

*L, A, G* Many of the men involved in establishing the government of Georgia have counties named after them. Using a blank map of Georgia, have students shade in these counties and give the contribution of each individual. *Note* - Hart County
*Note: Georgia Place Names* is the perfect resource for this activity, and is, within itself, a fascinating study.

*A, G* Write a news article which may have appeared in the *Georgia Gazette* during the time the Council of Safety regulated publications. Rewrite the same article as it might appear today.

*L, A, G* Choose individuals discussed in the unit and:

- Write a fictional short story or poem about him.
- Reproduce a picture taken from a print.
- Make a doll costume this individual would have worn during this period.
- Become that individual and write a letter to a friend describing some event in which you were involved; i.e., Continental Congress.

- Make a speech to the class giving four points of view on a topic which would have been discussed during the period.

*G* The advent of the American Revolution gave rise to multiple political labels such as conservative, liberal and radical. Trace the changing connotation of these labels through American history and compare its political meaning with today.

*A, G* Through construction of a chart and narration compare and contrast the function of Georgia government today with the function of the government immediately following the Revolution.

*G* The Whig movement in Georgia was composed of conservatives and liberals who were in constant and often bloody disagreement. Research the personal background of some of these men and determine if social and economic status was the basis for their vehement disagreements.

*A, G* Compare and contrast the Revolutionary period with the confederation period. Can we see any evidences of their contributions today?

*G* Obtain a copy of the present Georgia Constitution and a copy of the document written by the State Constitutional Convention in 1776. What similarities can you find?

*L, A, G* Follow the newspaper reports of the state legislative sessions for a few days. Choose any bill that is up for passage or has been passed. Divide the class into two groups—one group to represent today's legislatures and the second to represent members of the legislature in 1776. Role play an imaginary debate between the two groups.

*L, A, G* Read designated parts of the present Georgia Constitution. List five changes you would make if you were in the legislature voting on proposed changes in the constitution.

*L, A, G* After careful study of the different political groups in Georgia during 1775-1787, choose the group with whom you would have identified and share your reasons with the class.

*G* Research other states who were under British invasion and domination during the Revolution. How did their plight compare with Georgia's?

*G* Contact the Georgia Department of Archives and try to obtain a copy of the letter forged by George Walton. Discuss your finding with the class along with the reasons you think Walton committed the forgery.

*A, G* Trace the development of the county unit system in Georgia. How did the American Revolution affect this system? Invite a member of the legislature representing your district to discuss the system with the class.
Afterwards, debate: Given: The multiple number of county units is detrimental to future social and economic progress in Georgia.

*L, A, G* Have students work in groups and complete the following chart. Include men such as Archibald

Bulloch, Lyman Hall, Button Gwinnett, Lachlan McIntosh, John Adams Treutlen, John Houstoun, James Wright, George Walton, Joseph Clay, Nathan Brownson, etc.

| Men | Political Group They Represented | Time Period | Contribution | Present Day Affect |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |

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## SEEK AND FIND

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1. The first state chartered university
2. Georgia's first capital
3. Georgia's first governor
4. The last names of the three Georgians who signed the Declaration of Independence.
5. Council of _____
6. The number of governors in Georgia during the 1780's (p. 15-18).
7. The policy of giving land in return for services rendered during the Revolution or as an enticement to encourage settlers to move to Georgia.
8. Georgia's present governor
9. Each state government has three branches; the _____, legislative and _____.

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